Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

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EDITORIAL

Our readers will have noticed that the June issue of the Newsletter increased in size to 10 pages, which we hoped to maintain regularly, especially now that the Group subscription has been increased to £3. Unfortunately we have had to revert to an 8 page issue on this occasion, owing to a deplorable lack of contributions. What we have not got, we cannot print; it's as simple as that. Most distressing is the total absence of Causerie contributions, this quarter. Not one single question, not one single answer has been offered to us. This is very disappointing, because in the Causerie lies the chief raison d'être of the Group. There is space available to print questions and suggested answers within our range of specialist countries, and thereby to stimulate interest in these countries. To attempt to do this for every Latin American country would present Mainsheet with an impossible task, assuming that the supply of brief comments was regularly forthcoming. This is the first time that we have "dried up" totally, while we have only once had so much offered to us that we had to hold over any substantial amount to the next quarter. Please help to keep this valuable feature alive.

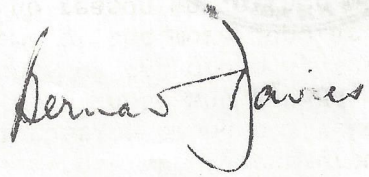
It may be worth recording for the consideration of members who were unable to be present at July's AGM of Spanish Main that there is currently a debate in the society about the value of specialist groups and the extent to which we should seek to form new ones to add to the existing Chile and Central American groups. Those who favour groups point to their ability to maintain regular contact with and discussion among collectors of these countries on a scale which would swamp Mainsheet and bore those who had no collecting interests within the groups. Against this, the opponents of the group system feel that it will eventually denude Mainsheet of material in some of the more popular areas, and that it could result in a fragmented society. We see no reason why either of these "disasters" should occur as long as Spanish Main remains our umbrella, and as long as Mainsheet receives articles from the groups and their members (even if it has to commission them).

We should be interested to hear our members' views. We certainly hope that our case will not go by default, as it might in the absence of Causerie and other short articles.

Finally, we remind members of the next two meetings of the Spanish Main at the Victory Services Club, Seymour Street, near Marble Arch, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.. Remember, you are welcome for part of the time if you do not wish to stay for the whole meeting. Refreshments may be bought on the premises.

SATURDAY 18th SEPTEMBER PRESIDENT'S DAY - Includes Mexico, El Salvador and Brazil.

SATURDAY 23rd OCTOBER CENTRAL AMERICAN GROUP MEETING with displays of Nicaragua (Mike Birks), Honduras (George Richardson), El Salvador (Bernard Davies), and we hope of Guatemala and Costa Rica.



NICARAGUA: THE "CARTERO" MARKINGS

by MICHAEL P BIRKS

The following notes have been compiled as a result of the response to my previous request for information about the Cartero markings of Nicaragua. It is not imagined that this listing is complete, but it does provide a list to which additions can be made as new markings come to light.

I am most grateful to Kilian Nathan for numerous photocopies of covers in his collection, and would also like to thank Finn Stjernholck and Bernard Davies for their most valuable help.
Where two dates are shown, these are the earliest and latest dates I have seen.

It is generally accepted that Cartero (Postman) markings were applied to covers by postmen on receipt of the letter, but this cannot be the whole explanation as these marks are found on many covers sent to the town indicated in the mark (indeed one cover I have seen has marks from both dispatch and arrival towns).

The following is a list of the markings which have so far come to light.

MANAGUA

Type I

Cartero No. 1	Sep 4	1897	-	Nov 18 1900
2	May 1	1901		
3	Sep 4	1900		
4*	Jan 22	1901	-	Jan 26 1901
5	Oct 1	1907		

*This handstamp appears to have been mutilated at some point, the figure four being cut into, and there are several breaks in the circle. No complete example has been seen, but it is assumed that accident and/or idle hands accounts for this variety.

Type II

Type III

Type IV

Cartero No 1 Jun 12 1906 Cartero No 2 Nov 25 1904 Cartero No 4 Oct 10 1904

Type IV

Cartero No. 1	Oct 25	1904	-	Nov 6 1904
2	Sep 27	1904		(10 A.M.)
3	Dec 20	1904		
4	Oct 30	1904	-	Mar 28 1905

The following two markings cannot definitely be attributed to Managua from the illustrations I have before me. All three covers were addressed to Managua, the first two (Type VI), from Granada, and the last (Type VII), from Leon. In view of the similarity, and the fact that these marks are found on covers received in the inscribed town, I tentatively assign them to Managua (tentatively because a similar mark (Type X) was probably applied in Granada, as the cover on which it was struck went from Granada to Hamburg).

Cartero No 1

Type VI

Cartero No. 1 May 25 1907
2 Mar 3 1908

Cartero No 1.

Type VII

Cartero No. 1 Mar 26 1930

LEON

Type I

Cartero No. 3 Feb 2 1904

Type VIII

Cartero No. 2 Dec 2 1901 - Apr 6 1903
4 Jan 26 1901
6 Apr 27 1905

GRANADA

Type IX

Cartero No. 1 Jul 2 1898 - Dec 5 1899
3 Jun 4 1899

Cartero No. 4.

Type X

Cartero No. 4 Nov 10 1907

BLUEFIELDS

Type VIII

Cartero No 1 Apr 15 1898

(Only one example seen: Kilian Nathan)

JINOTEGA

Type VIII

Cartero No 1 Dec 15 1902

JINOTEPE

Cartero No 3

on 20c Asenjo defin.

Type VIII

MASAYA

Cartero No 2 Sep 8 1898

Type I

RIVAS

Cartero No 1 Earliest on 5c Asenjo definitive.

Latest on 1c ABNCo definitive.

Type VIII

SAN JUAN DEL NORTE

Cartero No 1 on 1898 2c Seebeck (only one example seen: Mike Birks)

Type 1

Speculation

Certain facts are quite clear: Cartero marks were applied to covers in the town of dispatch as well as the town of arrival, or both. Two covers at least, exist with both Buzon and Cartero marks applied on the same cover.

It seems unlikely that the postmen would have carried a handstamp and inking pad with them on their rounds, and so I think that it is reasonable to assume that these marks were applied in the town post offices, and therefore not necessarily by the postmen to which they refer. I think it possible that marks applied in the town of dispatch were applied to mail handed to postmen on their rounds, when the postmen returned to the office with them. This, like the Buzon (pillar box) mark, showed the origin of the letter. This coincides with the generally held view of the origin of these marks.

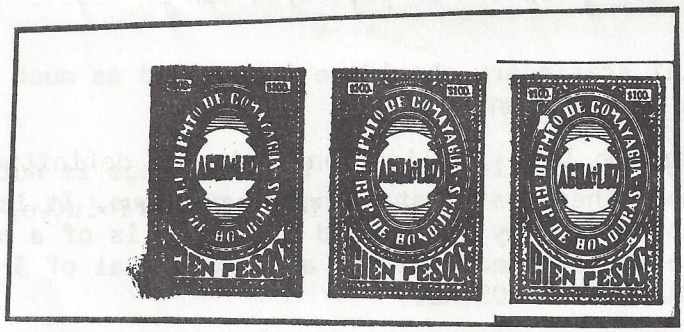
Cartero marks applied at the office of arrival served, I believe, a slightly different purpose. These marks could possibly have been sorting marks, i.e. the allocation of a cover to a particular postman for delivery, as opposed to a letter which would be collected from the office, probably by people who lived outside the town limits.

With one exception, all the covers I have examined support this speculation. The one exception is a cover of Bernard Davies, sent from Leon to Paris via Corinto, which bears a Buzon mark and a Cartero No 4 Leon mark. If this cover was posted in a pillar box in Leon (likely), and carried to Corinto by postman No 4 (speculation), then this cover also fits the pattern. It could just be an error though, and too much should not be read into just one example.

Your comments are invited.

AGUA Y LUZ CIEN PESOS by LEO HARRIS*

In a batch of fiscal stamps of the Republic of Honduras purchased fairly recently was one item that both puzzles and intrigues me. After much thought I am no nearer to a solution, and on the basis of the old adage of a trouble shared being a trouble halved - or is it? - I decided to describe and illustrate it within these pages, hoping that someone can point me in the right direction.



The item concerned is a reconstructed imperforate strip of three (a horizontal pair and a single) lithographed proof in black on thick white unwatermarked paper. I regard it so far to be a proof of a fiscal stamp.

The design measures 20mm x 30mm, but I shall not attempt to describe the "artwork" of frame and central design because it may be seen quite clearly. Within the frame of the oval is the inscription "DEPMTO DE COMAYAGUA/REP DE HONDURAS" (Department of Comayagaua, Republic of Honduras). Upon the white portion in the centre appear the words "AGUA Y LUZ". In the right and left top corners is the face value in figures "$100", and below the oval at the bottom the face value in words "CIEN PESOS" (one hundred pesos). This helps to date the item because in 1933 the currency was changed from "Pesos" to "Lempira" - named for an Indian chieften, c1525-30.

The first comment to be made is: the Republic itself has made use of fiscal stamps from 1877 to the present date. I also have an issue of municipal fiscal stamps dated 1918 and since no municipality is named I have assumed that the issue was intended for general use within municipalities abive a certain population level. I have never, however, heard of any fiscal stamp issued for a department or province. The "capital" of Comayagua province, Comayagua town, was the leading town of Honduras under Spanish dominion. This rôle was tranferred to Tegucigalpa when the Republic attained its independence in 1827 and is its present-day capital. It follows that Comayagua is one of the larger towns in the country.

The really intriging part of the "stamp" is the central inscription "Agua y Luz", literally "water and light". Whether these words are capable of any finer nuance of meaning, dependent upon the manner of use, I know not, so I must proceed on the basis of literal translation. There is no use anywhere in the inscription of the usual words one encounters on fiscal stamps using the Spanish language, such as "Derecho", "Renta", "Impuesto", "Sellos", "Timbre National" and the like, all of which indicate the imposition of duty or tax.

The obvious connection that springs to mind is that concerned with departmental responsibility for water and light undertakings; installation, maintenance or extension. Bearing in mind that it is pre-1933, can it mean the installation of universal electric current, remembering only too well that electricity was installed in the majority of households in the United Kingdom only in the later 1920's and early 1930's? The "water" part of it is more rational of course.

continued on page 6

* Reprinted from "The Cinderella Philatelist" of April 1982.

NICARAGUA: AN UNLISTED "OFFICIAL" ENVELOPE

by KILIAN NATHAN

Unfortunately and for a long time "POSTAL STATIONARY" was neglected by collectors of postage stamps. This, in my opinion, was a great mistake for at least two good reasons.

First, any postal stationary item is as much a postal document as is any stamp or cover.

Second, used postal stationary ie envelopes, postcards and wrappers can give very interesting information as to cancellations, routing and many secondary but important postal strikes, and messages written on postcards can in addition bring valuable information

For these reasons postal stationary should be integrated as much as possible into any specialized collection of any country.

The postal stationary envelope illusrated on the next page is not listed by Ascher, by Higgins and Gage, or any other postal stationery catalogue. It is a rather large size (legal size) envelope of 26·2cm by 11·1cm and its paper is of a blue-grey colour. The "stamp" is printed in black and reads within an ornate oval of 3·2cm by 2·5cm: REPUBLIQUE de NICARAGUA SERVICE POSTAL.

Two interesting facts: There is NO value indication and the words are written in FRENCH instead of Spanish, whereas the word "de" should have been spelled "du".

The envelope was used - probably by a Government Official - in Managua as early as September 1893 and sent to the Postmaster General of the German Empire in Berlin. Cancelled in Managua on September 9, 1893 it has the Corinto transit postmark for September 11, 1893 and the arrival postmark of Berlin for October 13, 1893.

The existence of the envelope raises several questions:-

i) Has anyone seen such an envelope before, or is any other collector the "happy" owner of such an item?

ii) Does such an envelope exist in any other size?

iii) Where, and by whom were these envelopes printed? Do there exist any similar imprints on stationary envelopes of other countries?

iv) Shouldn't this type of envelope be listed by Higgins & Gage, and other postal stationary catalogues?

Any answer or comment would be highly appreciated!

AGUA Y LUZ CIEN PESOS - (continued from page 5)

One cannot imagine for one moment that it is akin to the functional savings stamps used in the United Kingdom for the payment of general and water rates, electricity and gas bills and the like. Neither must one lose sight of the fact that 100 pesos at that time was quite a large sum of money, so for this reason it probably does not fall into the category of "fund-raising labels", which have been used extensively in Latin-America for various projects but were of modest face value.

I also have a single "stamp", of the imperforate plate proof or colour trial variety, 2 pesos orange on rough buff-coloured paper, which makes it almost impossible to study at close quarters.

These items bear no resemblance to any postage stamps issued by Honduras, and the central design could never be mistaken for the arms of Camayagua in any shape or form.

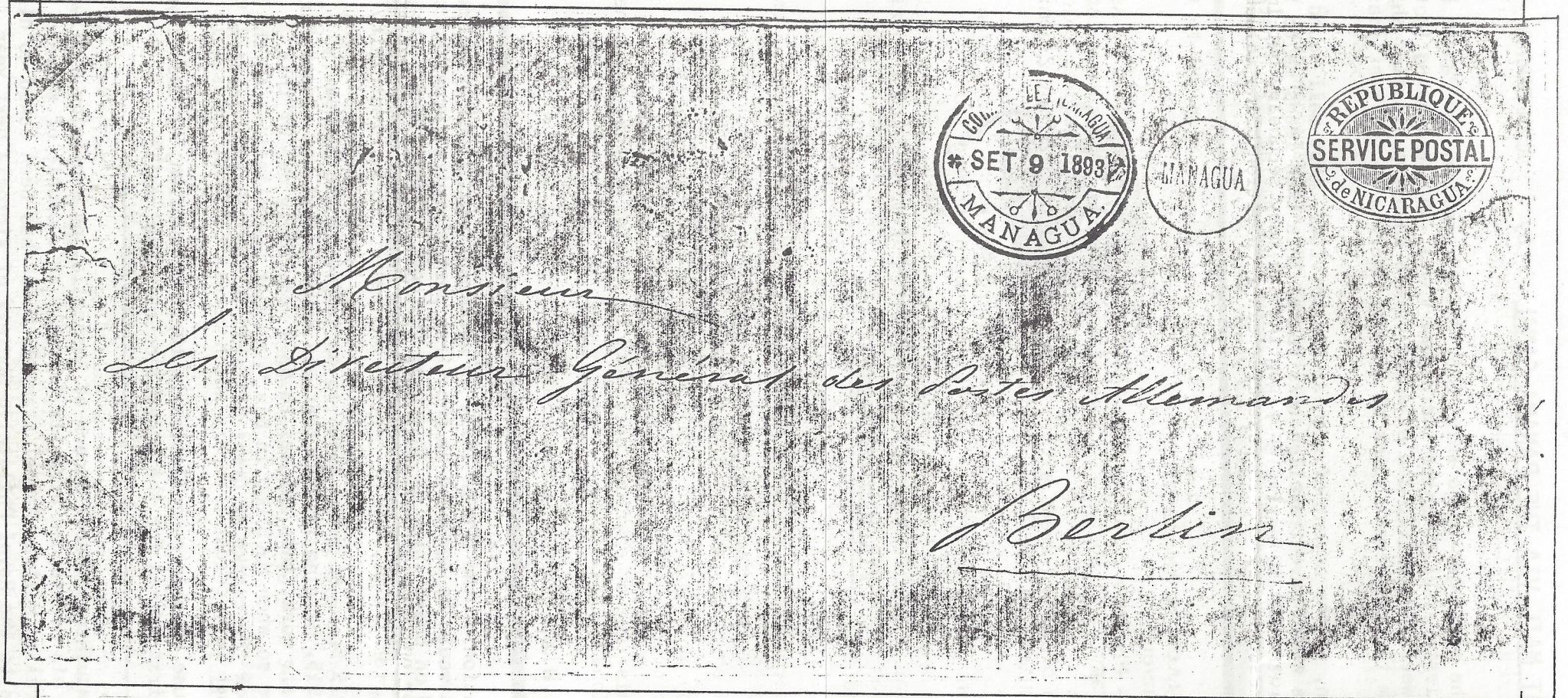
In the result I can do no more than pose some questions. (1) Was this "stamp" ever issued? (2) Is it a fiscal stamp? If so, (3) to what use was it intended to be put?

It is my hope that someone with a closer knowledge of such matters within the Republic of Honduras can supply answers to these questions. Any correspondence on the subject will be welcome, via the Editor, of course.

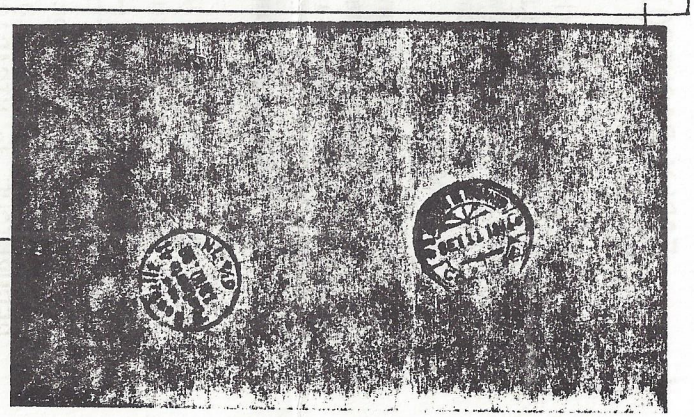
NICARAGUA

Envelope 1893

Official cover from Managua to Berlin



Cancelled Managua September 9, 1893
Transit postmark Corinto Sept. 11, 1893
Arrival postmark Berlin October 13, 1893



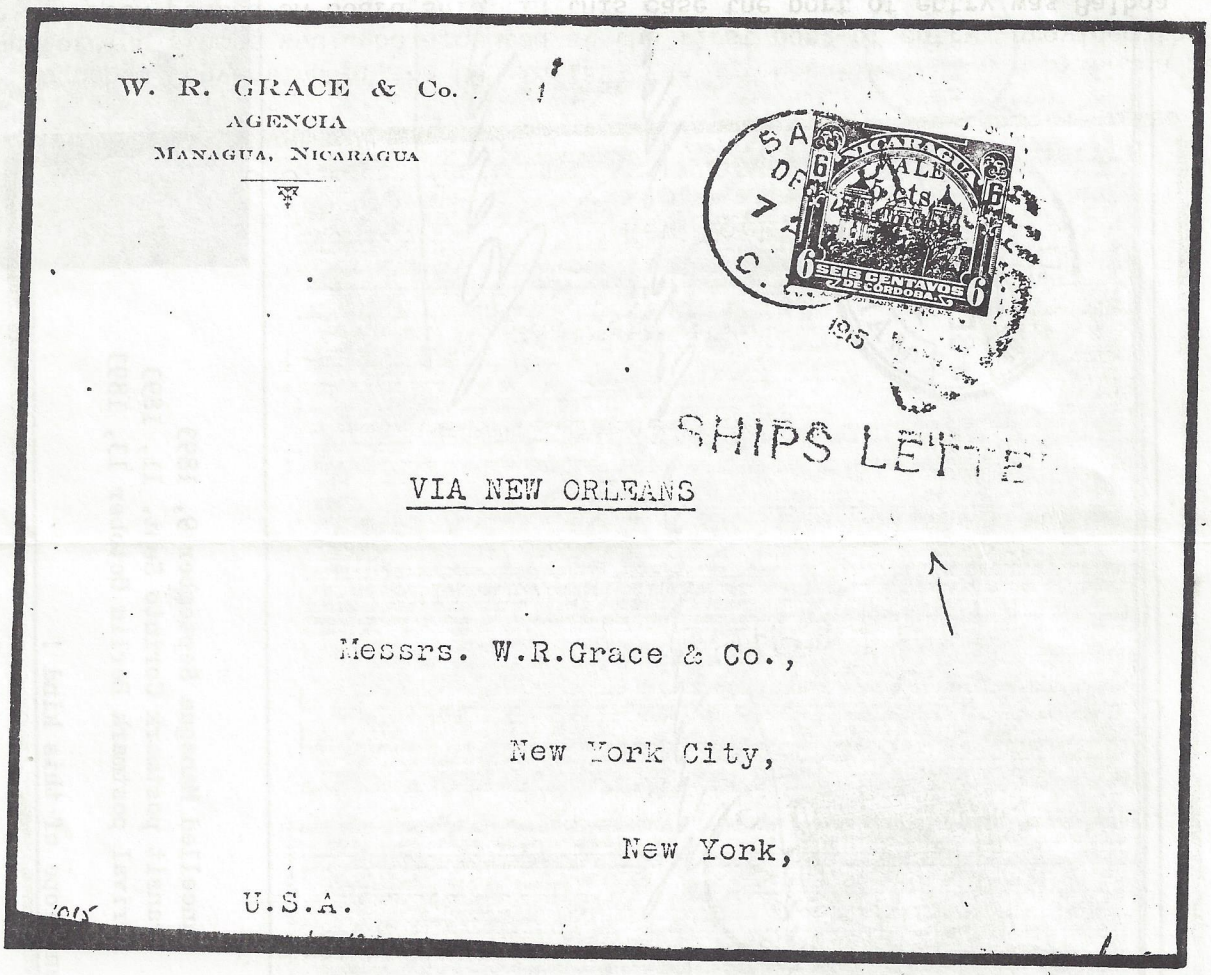
Probably the only still existing envelope of this kind !

EARLY PAQUEBOT MAIL VIA THE PANAMA CANAL

by ALAN BARROW

On August 15, 1914, the passenger-cargo ship "S.S. ANCON" owned by the Panama Railroad Company, became the first vessel to enter the Panama Canal, on its opening to traffic. So began the link between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans enabling speedier shipment of cargo and mail from the east coast towns of Central America to the west coast of the USA and Europe.

From this inauguration, to the advent of regular air services, most mail bound for the above destinations would have travelled this route. This then leads me to the paquebot cover illustrated below, posted on board ship after having left Nicaragua.



At the Paquebot Convention of the UPU in 1891, an agreement was signed by which mail bearing foreign stamps would be accepted at the first port of entry, provided the letter had been posted on board ship. In this case the port of entry was Balboa, itself being constructed at the same time as the Panama Canal, but opened for the acceptance of mail when?

The cover bearing a 1915 5c on 6c sepia SG406 is cancelled by the Balboa duplex of December 4, 1915. Bearing in mind that the Panama Canal was closed for some months in 1915 for repair work, this appears to be a very early use of this cancellation. Even more so when M A STUDD in his "Paquebot Cancellations of the World" and Dr J T WHITNEY's book "Postmarks of Great Britain" in the paquebot section, do not record its use until 1917.

Has anyone an earlier use of this cancellation in their collection, or does anyone know when Balboa was first opened for the acceptance of ships' mail?

We would like to congratulate Dr Derek Pocock of Australia, on receiving a silver medal at Palmpex in May, for his Nicaraguan airmails (as well as a couple of silvers for Nepal and Western Australian Railway Parcel stamps). Derek has been asked to display his Nicaraguan airmails to the Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria next year.